

## **DAVID N. VANASSE JR**

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Appropriations Committee  
Room 2700, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106  
Phone: 860-240-0390

Dear Appropriations Committee Members,

**RE: Testimony Opposing the Malloy Budget Summary: Department of Children and Families**  
**Page B-140; Recommended Significant Changes - Parole Services**

My name is David N. Vanasse Jr. and I have been employed by the Department of Children and Families under the Bureau of Juvenile Justice as a Parole Services worker for eleven years, eight months. I am assigned to the Special Care Unit within Parole Services that serves court adjudicated sexual offenders and fire-setters. This unit was developed back in 1999 to manage only cases of youth with problem sexual behaviors and eventually also included youth with histories of high-risk fire setting behavior. Protocols were formalized to represent case practice recommendations from a variety of resources. Research information was utilized from the Center of Sex Offender Management, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Colorado Sex Offender Management Board's Standards and Guidelines for the Evaluation, Assessment, Treatment, and Supervision of Juveniles who have committed Sexual Offenses.

The aforementioned research information was utilized to limit Parole Services workers caseload sizes to ensure intensive involvement in all aspects of a youth's treatment. The foundation of the Special Care Unit's case practice commences with case preparation involving intensive work with the youth, treatment provider, and family while the youth is in placement, and later moves to intensive supervision, monitoring, and case management of youth when said youth is transitioned home or into a lesser restrictive setting such as a group home. I can't stress enough the importance of intensive community supervision of the youth served by the Special Care Unit. Limited caseload sizes allow for youth living in the community to be seen face to face an average of 2-4 times per week.

Limited caseload size for this type of intensive treatment is equally important for the supervision of offenders in residential care. Limited caseload size allows for Parole Service workers to be in constant consultation the youth's treatment provider professionals who give direction in client treatment, appropriateness of treatment, and also recommendations regarding community re-integration. This information is invaluable at time of discharge planning and is used not only to formulate outpatient treatment goals but to assess continued risk factors during home placement.

In this testimony I am including statistics from a **Post-Discharge Recidivism Study Report of Connecticut Students** as prepared by Stetson School which speaks to the effectiveness of Parole Services efforts over the past 12 years since the inception of the Special Care Unit. During a ten-

year period spanning 1999-2009, based on Connecticut judicial adult conviction records, of 186 Connecticut students who discharged from Stetson School during that ten-year period 96.8% did not recidivate sexually, with a recidivism rate of only 3.2% for any new sexual convictions (including possession of child pornography) and 2.7% for former students engaged in hands on sexual assaults.

If the current budget proposal is passed, 22 Parole Service workers' jobs will be eliminated with the end result being the elimination of the Special Care Unit as we now know it. The supervision of youth who have been adjudicated for committing sex offenses will return to the days of being managed independent of each other, with all different workers and supervisors, none of whom specialize in the field of the treatment of adolescent sexual offenders. This will only foster minimal awareness of victim issues and community safety issues with limited time to accurately assess risk to reoffend. The current budget proposal will no longer support Parole Services current ability to address the multiple and often difficult needs of this population.

Raise the Age legislation also needs to be given significant consideration prior to the implementation of the current budget proposal. Current caseloads have been on the rise since the first phase implementation of the Raise the Age legislation which increased Connecticut's juvenile age to 16. As of July 2012, 17 year olds will also be included in this group. Not only will there be more youth entering the Juvenile Justice system, the length of time in which they can remain in the Juvenile Justice system will be increased. In some instances, we will be providing services to youth up until their 20<sup>th</sup> birthdays.

I believe that I have furnished this committee with documentation and statistics which support the day to day success Parole Services is currently having serving it's very challenging and difficult population. I have not found any documentation that will support the same type of success should 22 Parole Service workers be eliminated from DCF's Bureau of Juvenile Justice. It should be known that the initial proposal for this staff reduction was made by an administration that is no longer connected with DCF's Bureau of Juvenile Justice. It has been the experience of this author that this administration has never understood the complexities of this volatile population. They are all career Protective Services administrators who were given the responsibility to run a department that they had absolutely no prior working experience with. All departments in the State were asked to submit cuts and this outgoing administration chose Juvenile Justice. Why I ask? Is it because these youth are criminals and not as important as those involved with the child protection side of DCF? If so, would it also be safe to say that not treating these offenders as intensively as we currently do, are we then putting victims at higher risk? If this is indeed the thought process behind such an irresponsible proposal, why not roll back Raise the Age legislation and return to the days of treating 16 year olds as adults and incarcerating them? The reason we will not is because it is not the right thing to do and the legislators of this State who pushed Raise the Age understand just how fragile our youth are and that if we continue to treat young delinquents as adults, we will only be creating well-groomed adult offenders. Without question it costs more on the front-end to treat an adolescent as an adolescent and not as an adult. However, I would argue that in the long run if it keeps them out of the adult correctional system and they become productive members of society, the long-term burden to the taxpayers of the State of Connecticut will be significantly reduced.

Commissioner Joette Katz has been out to all the area DCF offices and shared her visions for the future of the Department of Children and Families. I am impressed with her drive and determination to get the agency back to a point where it's employees are all responsible for direct-care contact and not so management heavy. I just think it is so very unfortunate that she

was furnished with such poor information as how to move forward with the equally important youth serviced by DCF's Bureau of Juvenile Justice.

I thank you in advance for reading and giving consideration to my testimony. I have included my contact information and welcome the opportunity to speak further about my concerns.

Sincerely,

David N. Vanasse Jr